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DEPARTMENT FOR INL AND EUR/AGS (HIRONIMUS), JUSTICE FOR
OAI, AFMLS, AND NDDS, TREASURY FOR FINCEN, DEA FOR OILS AND
OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA: 2007 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR)

REF: SECSTATE 136780

I. Summary

Austria remains primarily a transit country for illicit drugs and does not produce any illicit substances of its own. As in previous years, foreign criminal groups from former Soviet-bloc countries, Turkey, West Africa, and Central and South America, still dominate the organized drug trafficking scene in the country. Austria is supplied the same way: its geographic location along major trans-European drug routes allows criminal groups to bring drugs into the country. Production, cultivation, and trafficking by Austrian nationals, however, remain insignificant. Drug consumption in Austria is well below west European levels and authorities do not consider it to be a severe problem. The number of drug users is currently estimated at around 35,000.

Cooperation with U.S. authorities continued to be outstanding during 2007. It was exemplified by a series of high level visits and led to significant seizures, frequently involving multiple countries, and a series of bilateral efforts.

In 2007, Austria continued its efforts to intensify regional police cooperation, particularly with regard to the Balkans. Austria also continued its year-long focus on providing policing know-how to countries in Central Asia. Austria is the seat of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and has been a major donor for several years. It has been a party to the 1971 and 1988 UN drug conventions since [1997](#).

II. Status of the Country

Despite a significant increase in drug users in Austria during 2007, the number of drug-related deaths increased slightly in 1997 and stood at 197 in October 2007. Authorities also confirm that the number of deaths from mixed intoxication continues to rise. According to police records, total violations of the Austrian Narcotics Act decreased. The latest statistics show 24,008 charges, a decrease of 9.39 percent from the previous year's total. Of these charges 1,317 involved psychotropic substances and 22,960 involved narcotic drugs. About 90 percent of the charges were misdemeanors.

Austria's National Drug Coordinator estimates the number of total drug abusers at around 35,000. The number of users of

MDMA (ecstasy) remained largely stable in 2007. A 2006 Interior Ministry report states that the ecstasy supply, to a large extent, is operated by Austrian rings. Usage of amphetamines rose during the past year. This is a Europe-wide trend as these substances become increasingly available in non-urban areas. According to a 2005 survey commissioned by the Health Ministry, approximately one-fifth of respondents admitted to consumption of an illegal substance. Most respondents cited cannabis, with ecstasy and amphetamines in second and third place respectively. Among young adults (ages 19-29), about 30 percent admitted "some experience" with cannabis at least once in their lifetimes. According to the study, 2-4 percent of this age group had already used cocaine, amphetamines, and ecstasy, while 3% had experience with biogenetic drugs.

III. Country Action Against Drugs in 2007

----- Domestic Policy Initiatives:

Throughout 2007, the Austrian government retained its no tolerance policy regarding drug traffickers while continuing a policy of "therapy before punishment" for non-dealing offenders. The Austrian government, heeding EU initiatives for stricter drug policies, introduced bills calling for stricter measures regarding certain types of medical narcotics prescriptions. According to critics, the controversial legislation would restrict prescriptions and infringe on patient privacy rights through increased surveillance of medical narcotics users. Austrian authorities are also pushing for stricter regulations regarding internet trade of illegal substances.

Certain types of surveillance of illegal drug behavior is already possible under a 2005 amendment allowing set up of

cameras in high-crime public areas. Critics argue that this only moves the drug scene to other areas. The 2005 law also provides for the establishment of a "protection zone" around schools and retirement centers from which police may ban suspected drug dealers for up to thirty days.

Regional/International Cooperation:

During its EU presidency (January - July, 2006), Austria initiated the EU's "Partnership for Security," with over fifty countries and organizations, including the U.S. and Russia, as participants. It reflects Austria's strong, year-long focus on the Balkans. One element of this strategy is the "Police Cooperation Convention for Southeastern Europe," which Austria co-signed. In May 2007, Austria headed the follow-up conference entitled "Drug Policing Balkans," where high-level officials, including Embassy Vienna's DEA representative, discussed drug smuggling along the Balkan route. In 2007, Austria held the co-chair for the Balkans region within the Dublin Group's Regional Chair system.

Austria is also a member of the Treaty of Pruem, a two-year old platform of eleven European countries which pledged to intensify cooperation in sensitive law enforcement areas such as DNA data sharing. At the EU level, the GOA is also pushing for a European Narcotics Institute (European drug academy) styled along the lines of the U.S. NIDA. Austria, however, remains critical of the EU Drug Action Plan saying that it contains no evaluation of harm reduction measures.

Throughout 2007, Austria maintained its lead role within the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CABSI) and the Vienna Initiative on Central Asia (VICA). Austria also intensified efforts to cooperate with countries in the Balkans.

Vienna is the seat of the UN's drug policing arm, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Austria contributed EUR 550,000 (USD 790,000) to this organization in 2007. In past years, Austria has been working with the UNODC, the EU, and Iran to establish border control checkpoints along the Afghan-Iranian border in order to prevent drug trafficking, particularly opium. Within the

UNODC, Austria also participates in crop monitoring and alternative development plans in Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, and Honduras. As in past years, the Austrian Interior Ministry dispatched anti-crime and drug trafficking liaison officers to Austrian embassies in twenty countries in Europe and the Mediterranean. Austria is also involved in narcotics cooperation programs with Ukraine, Russia, and other ACP countries.

Law Enforcement Efforts and Accomplishments:

Comprehensive seizure statistics for the previous year show an increase in seizures of cannabis, amphetamines, LSD, and psychotropic substances, and a decrease in ecstasy, cocaine, and heroin. Experts stress that the degree of purity and concentration of, ecstasy, speed, and other illegal substances has become increasingly volatile, representing a growing risk factor. This is due, in large part, to the advanced technology used in drug laboratories. The labs combine precursors, such as acetic anhydride and potassium permanganate, to create illicit drugs. The latest drug report from the Interior Ministry states that Austria's Precursor Monitoring Unit dealt with 157 cases in relation to precursors and clandestine drug laboratories - which is a hardly noticeable decrease of 4.27 percent - compared to 164 cases in 2005. In the year under review, two illegal drug laboratories were raided in Austria. A special training course on dismantling drug labs was held in cooperation with EUROPOL.

The total street value of illicit drugs remained unchanged. One gram of cannabis sold for EUR 7.00 (USD 10.00); one gram of heroin for EUR 80.00 (USD 113.00); and one gram of cocaine for EUR 90.00 (USD 127.00). Amphetamines sold for EUR 20.00 (USD 28.00) per gram, and LSD for EUR 30.00 (USD 43.00) per gram.

Corruption:

Austria has been a party to the OECD anti-bribery convention since 1999. The GOA's public corruption laws recognize and

punish the abuse of power by a public official. An attendant amendment expected to become effective January 1, 2008 will substantially increase penalties for bribery and abuse of office offenses. As of fall 2007, there were no corruption cases pending involving bribery of foreign public officials. In October 2007, a court found a senior Vienna police official guilty of minor bribery charges, which are not drug related. All in all, the USG is not aware of the involvement of any high-level Austrian government officials in drug-related corruption. According to the Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International, which publishes an annual corruption perception index, Austria dropped from tenth to fifteenth place (out of 159 countries) in 2007. This deterioration was mainly due to several banking fraud cases pending in Austria.

Agreements and Treaties:

Austria is a party to the 1988 UN drug convention, the 1961 single convention on narcotic drugs and its 1972 protocol, and the 1971 UN convention on psychotropic substances. Vienna is the seat of the UNODC and a major donor with an annual pledge of USD 440,000. Austria ratified the UN convention against transnational organized crime in 2004.

Cultivation:

Production of illicit drugs in Austria continued to be marginal in 2007. The Interior Ministry's annual report on drug-related crime noted a rise in private, indoor-grown, high-quality cannabis. Austria recorded no domestic cultivation of coca or opium in 2007.

Drug Flow/Transit:

The Interior Ministry's drug report stresses that Austria is not a source country for illicit drugs, but remains a transit country. According to DEA's quarterly trafficking report, illicit drug trade by Austrian nationals is negligible. Foreign criminal groups (e.g. Turks, Russians, Albanians, Bulgarians, and citizens of the former Yugoslavia) carry out

organized drug trafficking in Austria. Transporting over 90 percent of the cocaine in Austria, the Balkan route is a particularly problematic entrance into the country. The illicit trade increasingly relies on Central and East European airports, including Vienna's Schwechat International Airport.

Austrian authorities note that smuggling cocaine via luggage is on the decline, while body-carry and parcel shipments are on the rise. A continuing trend in Austria is for South African narcotics smugglers to use Caucasian women from former Soviet-bloc countries to smuggle drugs into Austria.

The trafficking of ecstasy products decreased slightly from previous years. However, GOA reports a noticeable increase of Austria being used as a transit country for ecstasy going from the Netherlands to the Balkans. Illicit trade in amphetamines and trading in cocaine increased. Criminal groups from Poland and Hungary were primarily responsible for this trade.

Domestic Programs:

Austrian authorities and the public generally view drug addiction as a disease rather than a crime. This is reflected in relatively liberal drug legislation and in court decisions. The government remains committed to measures to prevent the social marginalization of drug addicts. Federal guidelines ensure minimum quality standards for drug treatment facilities. GOA's demand reduction program emphasizes primary prevention, drug treatment, counseling, and so-called "harm reduction" measures, such as needle exchange programs. Ongoing challenges in demand reduction are the need for psychological care for drug victims and greater attention to older victims and immigrants.

Primary intervention starts at the pre-school level and continues through secondary school, apprenticeship institutions, and out-of-school youth programs. The government and local authorities routinely sponsor educational campaigns both within and outside of the classroom. Overall, youths in danger of addiction are primary targets of new treatment and care policies.

Austria has syringe exchange programs in place for HIV and

hepatitis prevention. Hepatitis B and C is commonplace among drug users at 59 percent. Policies toward greater diversification in substitution treatment (methadone, prolonged-action morphine, and buprenorphine) continued. Austria currently has 8,000 people in rehabilitation programs. The government, however, remains skeptical regarding heroin substitution programs, arguing that there are better solutions.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

----- Bilateral Cooperation:

Cooperation between Austrian and U.S. authorities continued to be excellent in 2007. Although Austria has no specific bilateral narcotics agreement with the U.S., several bilateral efforts exemplified this cooperation. These include joint DEA and BKA (Criminal Intelligence Service) training; the drafting of a criminal asset sharing agreement between the U.S. and Austria; and DEA support of Austria's Drug Policing Balkans initiative. Austrian Interior Ministry officials continued to consult the FBI, DEA, and DHS on how to update criminal investigation structures. In September, FBI Director Robert Mueller held senior level talks with Austrian security experts during a visit to Austria. In October 2007, Embassy's LEGAT Attache spoke at a gathering of top-level Austrian and international security experts in Salzburg. Also in October 2007, Interior Minister Guenther Platter traveled to the U.S. to discuss, inter alia, drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime with USG experts. The U.S. Embassy also regularly sponsors speaking tours of U.S. counter-narcotics experts in Austria.

The Road Ahead:

The U.S. will continue to support Austrian efforts to create more effective tools for law enforcement. The U.S. will work closely with Austria within the framework of U.S.-EU initiatives, the UN, and the OSCE. Our priority will remain the promotion of a better understanding of U.S. drug policy among Austrian officials.

McCaw